



Group Homes
Shelter Care
Foster Care
& Adoption

EXHIBIT 11

DATE

1-29-07

HB 2

MISSOULA
POLSON
KALISPELL
HAMILTON
HELENA

Appropriations Sub-Committee
January 29, 2007
Division of Child and Family Services

Youth Homes – provides an array of out of home and family support services – ranging from emergency shelter to group homes (both therapeutic and non-therapeutic, foster care and adoption and family support services. We are funded by fees paid from various state funded systems. Among these we work closely with the Division of Child and Family Services and DPHHS. It is there that we receive our licenses, agree to contracts, accept its rates and provide service to referrals from state workers in the Division. We appreciate our work with the Division and the special needs and demands of the children we serve together as partners. In addition we operate the partnership for Children with Intermountain and it serves younger children, 4 to 11, in community treatment group homes and then place these youngsters in foster homes in preparation for adoption or go home with our therapeutic support.

Rates – have not kept up with anything that resembles any index of the cost of living over the past years. Let me use shelter care – which is a service funded solely from the DCFS and Youth Court Placement budgets. This means no Medicaid funds are being used to refinance this service. In fiscal year '97 that complete rate for all services was set at 60.22 per day per child in care. Remember that rates in the “foster care” budget were established years earlier at a rate based upon 78% of the actual costs. Arguably that rate should have been, at least, set at \$77.21 per day and that still only based upon entry level wages for state employees performing similarly duties. Today, fiscal year '07, that rate is set at \$69.10. When adjusted to the COLA by 3% in each of the past ten years the current rate would be \$80.93 and thereby more than the actual rate (\$69.10) by 15%. The Executive Budget proposes a 2.5% increase in only the 1st year while the COLA is sitting at a rate of 3.3% per year, thereby promising non-profit providers to fall even farther behind the costs of services. This said at a time when most providers identify the children in shelter as more damaged, more needy and needing more services than in the past. We think it reasonable to ask the State to give providers a slightly better than COLA adjustment in each of the two years of the coming biennium and ask consideration of 4% increases in each year.

Line Worker Increases – Seventy-five cent raises were funded and awarded in the last session but only were funds made available to Medicaid providers. While workers in other group homes funded in the “foster care” budgets were overlooked in our case we were forced to find \$50,000 in private funds to cover equity among our line workers. We would ask that the State correct this inequity and award and fund all line workers in community group homes the seventy-five cent per hour raises.

Finally, I support any funding to strengthen staffing for child protection. Keeping our children safe and supporting this role for social workers to represent the needs of our children is basic and foundational in a civilization. We support additional FTE for child protection staff.

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